

Remarks to New Jersey State Senate

Richard L. McCormick, President

December 16, 2002

Thank you Senate President Codey, Senate President Bennett, Senate Majority Leader Kenny, and thanks to all the members of this distinguished body for the opportunity to address you today.

I appear before you at the start of my third week as the 19th President of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. You may know that I recently returned home to lead the institution I love and which has been such an integral part of my life.

What drew me home? Well, certainly, my deep emotional ties to New Jersey were important. But it was more than that. I came back to lead an outstanding university at a momentous juncture in its history.

Rutgers belongs to the people of New Jersey, and has a unique and proud tradition — first as a Colonial college, then as a land-grant institution and finally as the state university.

Throughout its 238 year history, Rutgers has fulfilled a three-fold mission: teaching students of every age and from every walk of life; conducting research to discover and apply new knowledge; and providing service to our citizens.

And we are proud of Rutgers' record. We have more than 320,000 living alumni, the great majority of them New Jersey residents. Our graduates have excelled in every arena; indeed 12 of them are members of this Senate. Rutgers faculty and students have advanced the world's body of knowledge and used that knowledge to heal the sick, feed the hungry, and lift the human spirit. They have represented New Jersey with dignity and pride, and we stand today among the most respected of our nation's public research universities.

Rutgers' presence is felt in every corner of this state. Through agricultural extension, collaboration with the K-12 schools, studies for government bodies, through partnerships with business, Rutgers reaches out to the citizens of New Jersey. If we have not always done this as well as we could have, if we have sometimes seemed aloof from the people and problems of our state, I promise we'll do better. No matter which district or which New Jerseyans you represent, Rutgers will meet the needs of your constituents and make you proud.

Today, the long and entwined histories of New Jersey and Rutgers have again reached a historic moment. The N.J. Commission on Health Science, Education and Training has proposed a major restructuring of the public research universities in our state. Championed by Governor McGreevey, the Commission's vision presents exceptional opportunities for Rutgers, for UMDNJ and NJIT, and for New Jersey.

We are ready to work with the Governor and the Legislature to create an even better system of public

higher education for this state and for the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. In the decades following World War II my parent's generation of Americans expanded access to colleges and universities, transformed American society and fueled an unprecedented prosperity.

Now it is our turn to step up to our responsibilities. New Jersey needs, deserves, and can afford top quality higher education. Indeed, it can afford no less. We must accommodate the rapidly growing demand for public higher education as our children's generation comes of college age. We must work through our short-term difficulties and focus on the long-term goals.

The decisions made in this Senate will profoundly affect not only health science education in New Jersey but also our undergraduate and graduate students, our ability to serve the people of our state, and, ultimately, our state's economic future. I pledge to work with you to seize this opportunity and to achieve these goals.

In conclusion, it is an honor for me to return to my home state at this time in the history of Rutgers. I came home to cement the bonds between Rutgers and New Jersey. My administration will be open and accessible and will be known for its willingness to listen and for its spirit of cooperation.

Thank you for the privilege of addressing this Senate today and for your support for Rutgers.

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Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Old Queen's • College Avenue Campus
83 Somerset Street • New Brunswick • New Jersey • 08901
Telephone: 732-932-7454 • Fax: 732-932-8060

[Email](#)

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